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ABSTRACT

Personnel evaluation in education occurs predominantly at the summative level and is used primarily for personnel decisions. Teachers are provided little feedback regarding their classroom performance and even less assistance in improving areas identified as weaknesses. While the improvement of instructional practice is perhaps the most important--and most positive--purpose of teacher evaluation, the current "dominant model" of teacher evaluation does not empower teachers to improve their instructional practices. Typically, there is no feedback for the teacher and no suggestions for improvement. The Collaborative Teacher Growth Model is offered as a possible alternative to the current system of evaluating teacher performance. This model incorporates feedback from a variety of sources--administrator observations, peer evaluations, student feedback, and teacher self-assessment--in an attempt to obtain a thorough and representative assessment of a teacher's instructional performance. The individuals then work collaboratively to develop an appropriate and individualized improvement plan for the teacher. However, several limitations to this alternative model exist. Language contained in state law and/or collective bargaining agreements often limit the frequency and scheduling of teacher evaluations. Fair dismissal laws may also specify that only individuals holding certain positions within the district may serve as evaluators of teaching performance. Finally, teachers must still be open to the idea of constructive feedback and must acknowledge that there is a need for improvement and that all teachers can improve. (Contains 36 references.) (Author)

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Running Head: CHALLENGES IN COLLABORATIVE TEACHER EVALUATION

A COLLABORATIVE MODEL OF TEACHER EVALUATION: ROLES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY VARIOUS CONSTITUENT GROUPS

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Abstract

Personnel evaluation in education occurs predominantly at the summative level and is used primarily for personnel decisions. Teachers are provided little feedback regarding their classroom performance and even less assistance in improving areas identified as weaknesses. While the improvement of instructional practice is perhaps the most important — and most positive — purpose of teacher evaluation, the current "dominant model" of teacher evaluation does not empower teachers to improve their instructional practices. Typically, there is no feedback for the teacher and no suggestions for improvements. The Collaborative Teacher Growth Model is offered as a possible alternative to the current system of evaluating teacher performance. The Model incorporates feedback from a variety of sources — administrator observations, peer evaluations, student feedback, and teacher self-assessment — in an attempt to obtain a thorough and representative assessment of a teacher's instructional performance. The individuals then work collaboratively to develop an appropriate and individualized improvement plan for the teacher.

However, several limitations to this alternative model exist. Language contained in state law and/or collective bargaining agreements often limit the frequency and scheduling of teacher evaluations. Fair dismissal laws may also specify that only individuals holding certain positions within the district may serve as evaluators of teaching performance. Finally, teachers must still be open to the idea of constructive feedback and must acknowledge that there is a need for improvement and that *all* teachers can improve.

A Collaborative Model Of Teacher Evaluation: Roles And Challenges Faced By Various Constituent Groups

Introduction

Virtually all educational institutions in the United States evaluate the qualifications and work of their personnel. These evaluations occur at several key "points" during an individual's period of service with the institution, including certification, selection (hiring), assignment, promotion, award of tenure, and allocation of special recognition or awards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988). Many institutions also use evaluation as a means to provide feedback for improving the performance of educational personnel.

Historically, there has been widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of personnel evaluation in education (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988). Educators, policy makers, and community groups often attack the near absence of personnel evaluation systems or the superficiality in the systems that do exist (p. 157). Highly developed and effective teacher evaluation systems are rare in American education (Darling-Hammond, 1986). Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983) state that "most existing systems [for evaluating teachers] are illogical, simplistic, unfair, counterproductive, or simply unproductive" (p. 158). Frase and Streshly (1994) assert that "teacher . . . evaluation appears to be purely ceremonial, with little or no intent to improve instruction . . ." (p. 50). Finally, Scriven (1980) declares that the procedures used in the evaluation of teaching are "shoddy at the intellectual and the practical levels" (p. 1).

The aim of this paper is to examine the purposes of teacher evaluation, in general, and the limitations, specifically, of the "dominant" model of teacher evaluation employed in most schools. This discussion serves as the basis for proposing an alternative collaborative

model of teacher evaluation, which has as its focus the improvement of instructional performance.

Purposes of Teacher Evaluation

Systems of teacher evaluation characteristically serve two purposes (Haefele, 1993; Levin, 1979; Stiggins, 1986). The first of these is to provide information for use in personnel management decisions (Stiggins, 1986). These decisions typically include hiring, firing, tenure, promotion, or merit pay (Stiggins, 1986; see also Haefele, 1993; Murray, 1987), basic retention of teachers from year to year (Levin, 1979), and teacher assignments and transfers (Thomas & Carroll, 1977). Also incorporated in these systems is the determination of whether educational personnel meet minimal expectations (Rothberg, 1984). For example, evaluations of beginning teachers serve as a means of assuring administrators that they possess the essential teaching skills (McColskey & Egelson, 1993). In this broad sense, these evaluations provide educational accountability (Stiggins & Duke, 1988) and are typically referred to as "summative" evaluations.

Summative, or accountability, systems make up the vast majority of the teacher evaluation systems. They are usually defined by state law and/or collective bargaining agreements between school districts and teachers (Stiggins, 1986). Oftentimes, the only accomplishment of summative evaluations is that the terms of the state teacher evaluation law, which requires evaluation, and the collective bargaining agreement, which specifies the procedures of the evaluation, are satisfied (Stiggins, 1986, p. 52). They typically represent a measurement of what *has* happened (Manning, 1988) — a sort of "after-the-fact" evaluation. The educational organization determines the criteria on which all teachers will be judged (McColskey & Egelson, 1993).

These evaluations are usually comprised of a preobservation conference between the teacher and supervisor (or evaluator), followed by classroom observation(s) by the evaluator. A meeting is then held to review and discuss the results of the evaluation. This "dominant model" of teacher evaluation will be discussed extensively later in this paper.

Systems of accountability do serve an important purpose (Duke & Stiggins, 1986). They strive to affect the quality of schools by protecting students from incompetent teachers (Stiggins, 1986). However, since it is assumed that most teachers are at least *minimally* competent, accountability systems typically focus on and affect only those few teachers who are least or not at all competent (Duke & Stiggins, 1986). Once minimum competence has been determined and tenure has been granted to a teacher, the accountability system no longer affects that teacher (Stiggins, 1986). Neither state laws nor collective bargaining agreements require teachers to move beyond minimum competence. Furthermore, the accountability system provides no motivation to do so.

The second purpose of teacher evaluation is concerned with the development and improvement of teacher performance (Haefele, 1993). The improvement of instructional practice is perhaps the most important — and most positive — purpose of evaluation (Manning, 1988). This form of evaluation provides information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of teachers in order for appropriate remedial training to be planned (Stiggins, 1986; Stiggins & Duke, 1988). These evaluations are designed to help teachers improve their teaching (Levin, 1979) according to the needs of their students, thus improving students' learning (Nevo, 1994), and are referred to as "formative" evaluations. Formative systems of teacher appraisal focus on the processes of counseling and training teachers (Haefele, 1993). Teacher evaluation systems of this type are rare (Stiggins, 1986).

An evaluation is formative if its sole purpose is to provide information that is useful for making decisions about how to teach (Cangelosi, 1991). Teachers engage in formative evaluation whenever they evaluate their own instruction for guidance in organizing, designing, or planning lessons (Cangelosi, 1991). Formative teacher evaluation is, by nature, typically more descriptive and less judgmental (Nevo, 1994). Teachers have a more favorable attitude toward evaluation when the results are used in a formative manner to help them improve performance (Haefele, 1993). An important attribute of formative teacher evaluation is a more active level of participation by the teacher being evaluated than is evident in summative evaluation systems (Bacharach, Conley, & Shedd, 1990). Stiggins (1986)

emphasizes the idea of teacher involvement in a formative system. He states that the feedback may come from a variety of sources (e.g., supervisors, peers, students, self-analysis) and may be continuous or intermittent, but it is the teachers' job to (a) evaluate the feedback and (b) take responsibility for acting on that feedback.

The key to a formative evaluation system is that the environment for collecting information is not judgmental or punitive, but rather supportive of growth and teacher-directed (McColskey & Egelson, 1993). It must be nonthreatening to the receiving teacher (Manning, 1988). A formative system can help to (a) encourage continual teacher self-evaluation and reflection and discourage the development of teaching routines that never change, (b) encourage individual professional growth in areas of interest to the teacher, (c) improve teacher morale and motivation by treating the teacher as a professional who is in charge of his or her own professional growth, (d) encourage teacher collegiality and discussion about practices among peers in a school, and (e) support teachers as they try new instructional approaches (McColskey & Egelson, 1993, p. 2).

Formative, or growth-oriented, systems have the potential of affecting *all* teachers — not just those who are having severe problems (Stiggins, 1986). Teachers vary a great deal regarding their levels of competence; all can benefit from sound evaluation, encouragement, and professional growth (Duke & Stiggins, 1986). Formative systems are designed to promote excellence by helping already competent teachers reach new levels of professional competence (Stiggins, 1986). The standards which define "excellence" may vary drastically from teacher to teacher, situation to situation. These systems essentially focus on the interests of the *professional* teacher (Stiggins, 1986).

The "Dominant Model" of Teacher Evaluation

A standard model of evaluating teaching has been employed in schools for decades (Haefele, 1993). This model continues to be the most widely used and accepted model in the public school systems (Bailey, 1978; Levin, 1979). It is truly the "dominant model" of teacher evaluation.

In most school districts, nontenured teachers are observed two to three times each year (Gitlin & Smyth, 1990; Haefele, 1993; Levin, 1979; Savage & McCord, 1986). The evaluations are usually conducted by the building principal and last between 20 and 30 minutes (Darling-Hammond, 1986, p. 531; Haefele, 1993; Johnston & Hodge, 1981). Tenured teachers are observed for approximately the same length of time, but less frequently (Haefele, 1993). Sometimes, the observation is followed by a conference, where the principal's responsibility is to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's performance and offer suggestions for improvement (Haefele, 1993). This process typically involves one-way communication from the evaluator to the teacher (Gitlin & Smyth, 1990). All teachers are evaluated using a common instrument and fixed procedures.

Limitations of the "Dominant Model"

Research has shown that even this dominant model is not implemented in a thorough, consistent manner. Huddle (1985) summarizes selected results from the National Institute of Education's "High School and Beyond Teacher and Administrator Survey." Teachers were asked how often they were observed by *any* supervisor during the previous year. One-fourth (26%) of the respondents indicated "never," another one-fourth (27%) responded "only once," and nearly another one-fourth (23%) indicated "twice." Infrequently performed evaluation, such as those experienced by the teachers responding to this survey, certainly have limited validity (Huddle, 1985).

The disadvantages of the dominant model are numerous and include the following: (a) the teacher is almost totally dependent on the evaluator to collect and analyze information; (b) the quality of improvement of instruction is closely aligned with the accuracy of a single evaluator's perceptions; (c) the evaluator seldom takes the time to share methods, processes, or techniques that could assist the teacher in correcting weaknesses and maintaining that behavior; and (d) teachers often perceive these evaluation activities as a threat (Bailey, 1978, p. 54).

Other weaknesses of this model address the fact that most evaluators (principals) have had no training in observational techniques and do little or no preparation prior to observing a teacher (Levin, 1979). Cangelosi (1991) claims that unless observers are trained to use well-designed observational instruments, observations of teachers in classrooms "will continue to be dominated by malpractice that produces invalid results" (p. 47).

Additional problems inherent in the dominant model result from the assignment of the evaluation function entirely to principals, in most cases (Darling-Hammond, 1986). Principals have numerous roles to play and many activities to oversee. They have little time for the evaluation of teaching personnel. They may be unwilling, or simply unable, to devote the time necessary to conduct thorough evaluations (Savage, 1982). It is unreasonable to expect them to have specialized content area or pedagogical knowledge of *all* teaching areas in which they are required to evaluate staff.

Because of these difficulties, many principals do harm to the evaluation task by omitting preobservation conferences, making brief unannounced visits to the classroom, and minimizing the follow-up activity by simply placing a copy of the completed rating form in the teacher's mailbox, as if it were a "report card" (Savage, 1982, pp. 41-42). Needless to say, this report card style of teacher evaluation results in little improvement in teaching effectiveness (Jacobson, 1986).

Finally, this dominant form of teacher evaluation serves to separate teachers from one another. It does not encourage them to establish a communicative environment where knowledge and practices are shared. Rather, it invites them to compete against each other so as to look better on the evaluative criteria (Gitlin & Smyth, 1990).

As an evaluation system, the dominant model is lacking three essential components. These include: (a) evaluators lack two essential sets of skills needed to evaluate teachers: skills in evaluating teacher performance, and skills in communicating with teachers about the results of the evaluation process; (b) there is insufficient time for both evaluations and follow-up activities; and (c) the process for linking staff development and teacher evaluation is not clear or does not exist (Stiggins & Duke, 1988).

The Need for Multiple Sources of Data

Many sources of data not permitted in accountability systems are viable options for growth systems (Stiggins, 1986). Since accountability evaluations are subject to public (and possibly judicial) scrutiny, the data required to demonstrate minimum competence must be objective and standardized for all teachers. These evaluations must be legally defensible.

It is highly recommended that multiple sources of data be used in the evaluation of teachers (Jacobson, 1986; Peterson & Kauchak, 1982; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Stodolsky, 1990; West & Denton, 1991). The most common justification for this belief is that the complexity of teaching requires extensive data sources and indicators of quality. No single method of teacher evaluation can produce data measuring equally well all of the factors of teaching effectiveness (Peterson, 1990, p. 111). The result is a more adequate data base for teacher evaluation.

Systems comprised of multiple data sources provide for an evaluation of teaching performance that is less affected by peculiarities of specific evaluators or of certain data collection methods. Additionally, they offer compensation for teachers who may have difficulty in conducting class when an evaluator is present (West & Denton, 1991). Many of these systems are designed to promote professional growth and are not subject to the rigid constraints of accountability systems.

Alternative, or supplemental, sources of data fall into six basic categories: (1) observation by supervisors; (2) the use of a structured observation instrument or system, (3) self-evaluation; (4) gains shown by students; (5) special teacher tests; and (6) students' ratings of teaching (Levin, 1979). Many of these data sources have their own unique weaknesses. The utility and informativeness of some of the data may not make all of them worth the time and effort required to collect them (Weber, 1987).

A Collaborative Teacher Growth Model

A possible alternative to the inconsistent application of the dominant model and the subsequent inadequacies created by its use is the Collaborative Teacher Growth Model (see Fig. 1). Instead of relying on the administrator observations as the sole source of information, the Collaborative Teacher Growth Model incorporates feedback from students, peers, and the teacher's self-assessments.

Student Feedback

It has been assumed that since students are the only individuals who are constantly exposed to the various elements of a course (e.g., instructor, textbook, homework, course content, method of instruction, etc.), they are the most logical evaluators of the effectiveness of those course elements (Aleomoni & Spencer, 1973). They can provide insights that no one else can (Stiggins, 1986). Students are the only observers who are in class on a regular basis; they are in the classroom every day (Jacobson, 1986; Savage & McCord, 1986; Stiggins & Duke, 1988). For example, no one is in a better position to critique the clarity of teacher directions than the students for whom the directions are intended (Stiggins & Duke, 1988). Students are best able to provide feedback about when they are bored or when they are lost or confused (McColskey & Egelson, 1993). Moreover, feedback provided by students fosters the emotional relationship between teacher and student (Tacke & Hofer, 1979). Student ratings have also been shown to provide useful information in identifying teaching behaviors of student teachers perceived by students to be most effective and least effective (Martin, 1988).

Furthermore, it can be argued that a teacher can hardly keep from being influenced by the informal feedback provided by students (Cangelosi, 1991). In a study conducted by Mertler (1996), the vast majority of teachers perceived student feedback to be extremely beneficial in terms of identifying both strengths and weaknesses of classroom instruction. Students believe that their opinions about teachers do make a difference in the ways teachers teach and that teacher ratings are not a waste of time (Traugh & Duell, 1980). Therefore, it

seems reasonable to assume that students take their ratings seriously and mark the rating forms as accurately as they can. Provided the students are not asked to comment on aspects of teaching in which they have no expertise, feedback from them constitutes an excellent data source for professional development (Stiggins & Duke, 1988).

Peer Evaluation

Using peer evaluation, the number and quality of teaching observations can vastly increase, with the improvement of instruction becoming the primary focus. Additional perspectives can be gained while the sample size (i.e., number of observations) greatly increases, thus resulting in a more representative picture of a teacher's instructional abilities.

Peer observers can help the formative evaluation program gain needed factors, such as trust and collegiality (Manning, 1988). Trust is a very significant element in the process of peer evaluation (Manning, 1988). Fear of receiving negative judgments from the observer has, in the past, prevented teachers from viewing the feedback as constructive, essentially prohibiting improvement. The peer observer "must be viewed as a colleague who will help in a nonthreatening manner" (Manning, 1988, p. 44). Additionally, the observer must be seen as someone who is credible and knowledgeable with respect to content area or grade level (Duke & Stiggins, 1986).

Peer observations can lead to collegiality among teachers (Manning, 1988). In addition, they can also promote the modeling of appropriate teaching practices from observer to those being observed. Another benefit of peer observations is that not only do those being observed learn, but so too do the observers.

Teacher Self-Assessment

No teacher can avoid making judgments about her or his own instruction (Cangelosi, 1991). Some teachers engage in formal and systematic evaluation of their own instruction on a regular basis. Self-evaluation can be very effective when used in combination with other sources of information (McColskey & Egelson, 1993). Self-assessment might take the form

of a journal containing a narrative of experiences during the course of instructing a unit or while implementing change. Alternatively, a teacher could assemble a portfolio of materials that he or she has developed (e.g., lesson plans, instructional materials, written tests, etc.) for the purposes of evaluating the quality of the products at a later time (McColskey & Egelson, 1993). Finally, the ease of availability and use of videotape recorders permit teachers to view, review, and critique all aspects of their instruction.

The Individualized Improvement Plan

All of these sources of feedback may prove meaningless (and overwhelming!) unless further action is taken by the teacher. In an on-going fashion, the teacher should work collaboratively with, at a minimum, the supervisor or department chair and the administrator (principal) to review and synthesize the feedback collected from these various sources. Peers may also be involved in this stage of the process. The desired outcome of this collaborative work is to identify areas of weakness and to develop an appropriate and individualized improvement plan for each teacher. In subsequent years, a teacher's formative evaluations may focus on the extent to which he or she has met the goals of the individualized improvement plan from the previous year (or period of evaluation).

Current Challenges

While the potential for increased instructional effectiveness and professional growth demonstrated by this collaborative model may be evident and even enticing, there are challenges to its full implementation. The authors will limit their discussion to some of the legal challenges of the implementation of this model in the state of Ohio.

Fair Dismissal

Since 1988 and the enactment of the "Fair Dismissal" procedure in Ohio, districts are required to provide certain evaluation procedures of teachers in their respective districts.

Evaluations are generally to be conducted for a specific (minimum) number of times and within a certain (limited) time period.

> Unless otherwise provided in a collective bargaining agreement, a board of education must evaluate the teacher in accordance with certain statutory requirements. The teacher must be evaluated twice in the school year...One evaluation must be conducted no later than January 15, with a written report being due no later than January 25. Another evaluation must be conducted between February 10 and April 1, with a written report to the teacher no later than April 10. (Baker & Carey, 1996, pp. 381-382.)

Each of the written reports must include recommendations to correct and or improve teacher effectiveness. When the authors spoke with supervisors and administrators from several districts in Ohio, they indicated that these time-lines and procedures limited the frequency and types of teacher evaluations they were able to use. Primarily, districts in this study used a traditional model of evaluation consisting of pre-observation conferences, classrooms observations of 30 or more minutes, and post-observation conferences. In some of these districts, teacher self-evaluation was also practiced.

Legal Limitations of Who Can Evaluate Teachers

While the model proposed in this paper incorporates several important sources of information (i.e., administrators, peers, and students) to improve instruction and the professional growth of the teacher, The Ohio Revised Code, Fair Dismissal Law clearly limits the individuals that can participate in the evaluation of classroom practice:

> The evaluator must be employed in the district as an administrator and certified as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, or supervisor. (Baker & Carey, 1996, p. 382.)

Evident is the strong limiting impact this language has on use of peer and student evaluations. Ohio law does provide for teacher-peer review when a board of education enters in to an agreement with its teachers, and yet while peer evaluation is used in some districts, the use of student evaluations and self-evaluations are rare or non-existent in the districts with whom we spoke.

Student Feedback

The used of student feedback is a controversial issue with many teachers in Ohio and the United States. The proposed model in this paper clearly articulates the importance of students' perceptions of their teachers and the reasons for such evaluation. Yet, in the districts that participated in this study, student feedback is not used in teacher evaluation language employed in formal master agreements. Many of the administrators we spoke with stated that this source of feedback is used by some teachers on an "informal basis," but to the best of their knowledge, it is not used in any formal teaching evaluation.

The current reform movements across the nation should be addressing effective evaluation by supporting the multiple sources of feedback as suggested in this paper. All districts in the state of Ohio follow evaluation procedures and processes provided in collective bargaining agreements (Baker & Carey, 1996). In most instances, these collective agreements exclude peer and student evaluation feedback practices; therefore, at the current time, few Ohio school districts benefit from these practices. Yet, the application of such strategic planning models as T.Q.M. and the Effective Schools concepts has laid the foundation for the inclusion of such evaluations and feedback.

Summary

Teacher evaluation is just one of many aspects in the lives of teachers. It is an integral component of the profession, from preservice training through certification, contract renewal, and professional development (Nevo, 1994). However, it has come to be viewed by those it was meant to help as a means of controlling teachers, motivating them, holding them accountable for their performance, or getting rid of them when their performance is poor. The Collaborative Teacher Growth Model offers an alternative to the inadequate teacher evaluation currently being implemented in most schools. Establishing a system of teacher evaluation that has as its focus the improvement of teaching performance by all teachers and that relies on data from multiple sources will only result in a more thorough assessment of an

individual teacher's performance, thus allowing for a more appropriate and comprehensive plan for professional development. However, several limitations to this alternative model exist. Language contained in state law and/or collective bargaining agreements often limit the frequency and scheduling of teacher evaluations. Fair dismissal laws may also specify that only individuals holding certain positions within the district may serve as evaluators of teaching performance. Finally, teachers must still be open to the idea of constructive feedback and must acknowledge that there is a need for improvement and that *all* teachers can improve.

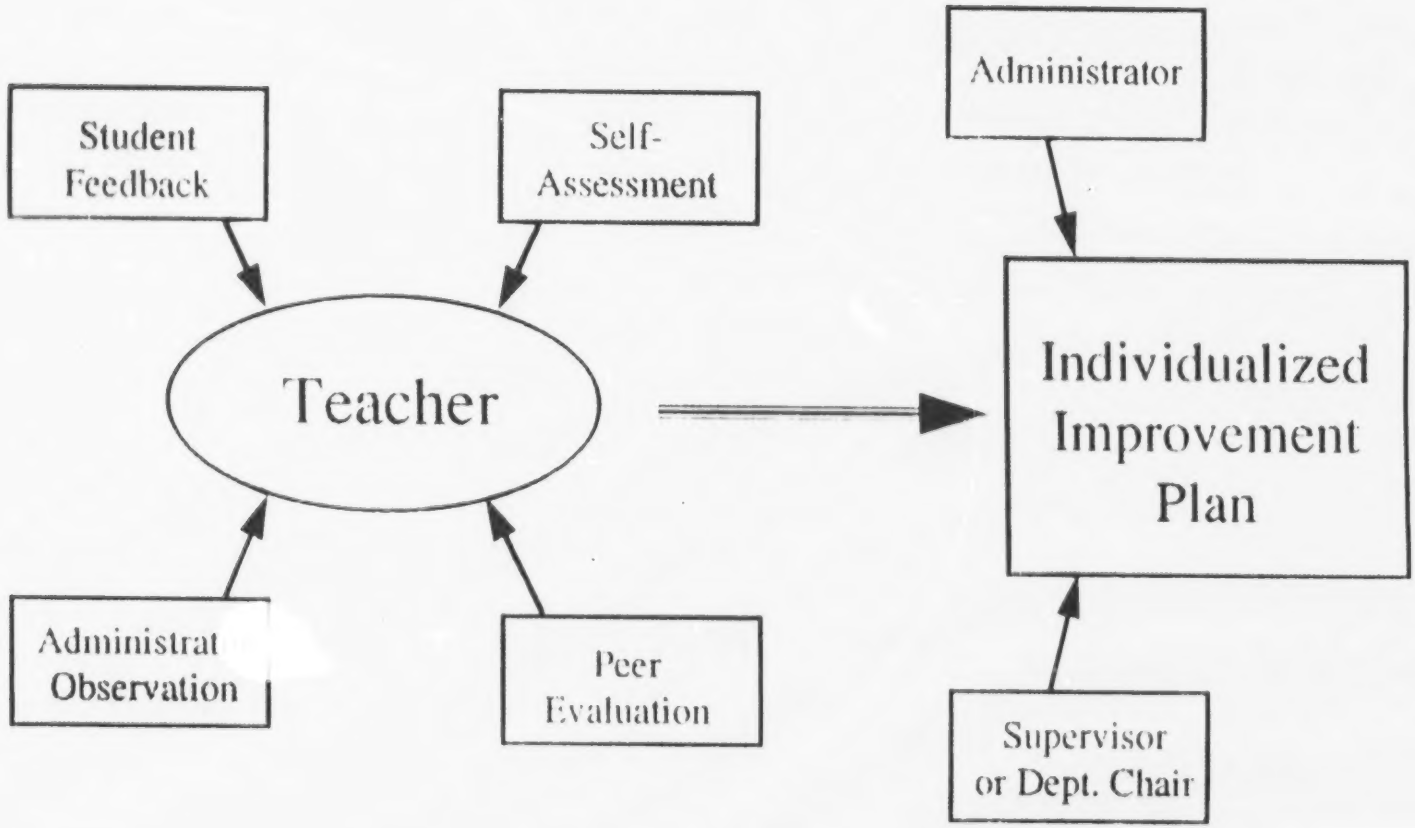

Fig. 1. The Collaborative Teacher Growth Model

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